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School Committee Minutes 11/21/2013

Approved by the Arlington School Committee December 12, 2013

*Arlington School Committee
Regular School Committee Meeting
Thursday November 21, 2013
6:30 p.m.
School Committee Room
Arlington High School
869 Massachusetts Avenue
Arlington, MA 02476*

Present: Mr. Judson Pierce, Chair, Mr. William Hayner, Vice Chair, Ms. Cindy Starks, Secretary, Mr. Jeff Thielman, Mr. Paul Schlichtman, and Dr. Kirsi Allison-Ampe

Dr. Kathleen Bodie, Superintendent, Ms. Diane Johnson, Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Rob Spiegel, Human Resource Officer, Ms. Siobhan Foley, AEA Representative, and Karen Fitzgerald, Administrative Assistant.

Absent: Dr. Laura Chesson, Assistant Superintendent, Kathleen Lockyer, Interim Director of Special Education, AAA Representative and, Student Representative.

Mr. Pierce exited the meeting at 8:50 and returned at 9:00 p.m.

Opening Remarks

Mr. Pierce, held a moment of silence for webmaster, Ms. Claudia Bertoli's father, Mr. Giuseppe Polce who passed away this past week, for the family of Mei Jones who were tragically murdered here in Arlington this week, and for the 50th year anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's assassination.

Happening around Arlington Public Schools

Students from three elementary schools composed and presented their community service projects at the School Committee meeting. Student Katie Boyle from Dallin Elementary, spoke on Kids for Change, student Jackson Dray, 5th Grader from Bishop, spoke on a UNICEF project, and Varun McIntyre, Jackson Dupont, and Nico Martinez from Brackett school, each spoke on their UNICEF project, collecting food for the Food Pantry and for the Anton's Winter Coat drive. Dr. Bodie and the entire school committee were very impressed on how the students composed themselves and saw how excited and proud each student was to be helping others less fortunate than themselves.

Public Participation

Ms. Kathleen Coughlin and her husband Mr. Michael Vartabedian read their letter that was sent to the full school committee, about their concern with the Tools of the Mind curriculum for their kindergartener. They stated the books read aloud are from the Magic Tree House series but noted that the books are for children aged 8 to 12 and for children in grades 3 to 7. Their daughter is only five years old, and very frightened by these books, about mummies, knights and pirates when she comes home from school. The parents are asking for support from the committee to review the materials being presented to kindergarten students.

Elementary Principals – Discussion on Priority's on FY 15 Budget (Goal 3)

The seven elementary principals: Mr. McAneny, Ms. DeFrancisco, Mr. Hanna, Dr. Woods, Ms. Zerchikov, Ms. Donovan and Ms. Hartley began by thanking the School Committee, Superintendent and Assistant superintendent for supporting elementary level staffing this past year. They came tonight to recommend that in next year's budget, we add more Teaching Assistants as

well as Behavioral Specialists to the elementary budgets and that library Teaching Assistants be changed to full paraprofessionals and that their pay is increased as well at each of their schools.

The principals agreed, when asked by the School Committee members that an ideal class size for grades K, 1, and 2 should be capped at 20 students and 20 to 22 for grades 3,4 and 5. Ideally they would like to double the amount of Behavior Support currently in the district as well as increase Teaching Assistants. Mr. Thielman asked the team to prioritize their request and the majority chose to reclassify Library Teaching Assistants and then chose to prioritize hiring additional Behaviorist Specialist. Ms. Parkin spoke on the importance of these experts to support the staff and children at each of the elementary schools. The growth and enrollment of classrooms as well as space issues and the impact to each school was discussed.

Tools of the Mind Update (Goal 2.3)

Sheri Donovan spoke about the philosophy on the what and why of self-regulation and teaching it in kindergarten. She also spoke on the history of the kindergarten curriculum, the kindergarten grant and the pilot program of Tools of the Mind curriculum in the Arlington Public Schools. After a two year pilot, the School Committee voted and approved to adopt this curriculum which now every kindergarten classroom uses to teach all our kindergarten students. It was the consensus of the committee that they agree with the goals and layout of the curriculum, but concerns also came from Mr. Pierce and Dr. Allison Ampe who questioned the rationale on why we had to change to this curriculum since not all teachers agree with it. Mr. Pierce suggested that the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Subcommittee take a review of the Tools curriculum and keep the full committee informed on updates.

Monthly Financial Report

Ms. Johnson presented the November 2013 monthly tracking reports and noted that Special Education Out of District tuition continues to be a place of budgetary concern. Ms. Johnson said projected savings in clerical, maintenance and custodial salaries are expected due to positions being open, but all budgeted amounts will be fully depleted at the end of the fiscal year. Ms. Johnson explained that planning for FY 15 is ongoing but with enrollment growth and Special Education costs increasing, additional support will need to come from the Town. Mr. Hayner had a few budget line items he questioned Ms. Johnson on but with projections and variances, the actual expenditures are on plan.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Bodie thanked all the social workers and crisis care teams who were at the Pierce Elementary School due to the tragedy this week on Newland Road. Dr. Bodie gave kudos to the Dead Man Walking cast members for their performance last weekend, and acknowledged Ms. Annemarie Abbott and Ms. Nicole Melnick on presenting at the IPAD summit on social media. Dr. Bodie spoke on the success of the athletic teams during the fall season.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Hayner moved to approve all items listed with an asterisk (*) are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the committee so request, in which event the item will be considered in its normal sequence:

***Approval of Warrant # 14067 Dated November 14, 2013 Total Warrant Amount \$636,227.31**

***Approval of Draft Minutes: None**

***Approval of Facing Racism student Weekend Retreat, Friday, March 14, 2014 6 p.m. – Sunday March 16, 2014, seconded by Mr. Thielman. Voted: 7-0**

Subcommittee & Liaison Reports

Policies & Procedures

Mr. Thielman moved to approve the 2nd Reading of BEDH Public Participation at School Committee Meetings, seconded by Mr. Hayner.

Voted: 7-0

Budget, Ms. Starks gave a brief update on the Long Range Planning meeting she attended where the enrollment growth and special education costs as well as plans on rebuilding Stratton Elementary School were discussed. The next meeting will be held on Monday December 16th, at 8:00 a.m. in the Town Hall Annex. At this meeting, we expect the Town Manager to present some possible additional funding scenarios for the schools.

Community Relations, L. Heigham~~~had nothing to report.~~~~~

Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment & Accountability, K. Allison-Ampe will hold a meeting before the next School Committee meeting, Tools of the Mind will be one agenda item.

Facilities, B. Hayner nothing to report, but wanted to affirm an Statement of Interest will be signed by Dr. Bodie.

Chair nothing to report.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Starks reported on the following correspondence being received:

- Emails from Linda Hanson (president AEA) about concerns with Boston and releasing teacher ratings to the public and what that means in Arlington and requesting a discussion about what school level release of data will mean in Arlington and how we want to deal with that.
- Email from the superintendent outlining how the tragedy in town was handled in the Peirce school.
- Invitation for a wellness summit to be held at Gillette Stadium on Tuesday, December 10.

Executive Session

Mr. Hayner moved to enter into Executive Session at 9:10 p.m. to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with union and/or nonunion personnel or contract negotiations with union and/or nonunion in which if held in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect and to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares, and to approve the Memorandum of Agreement, Arlington Education Association, Unit A (AEA), Evaluation Changes for the 2013-2014 school year Performing and Visual Arts and Ottoson Reading, and return to open session, seconded by Ms. Starks.

Roll Call: unanimous

Voted: 7-0

Mr. Hayner moved to Approve the Memorandum of Agreement between the Arlington School Committee and the Arlington Education Association, Unit A (AEA) on the evaluation changes for the 2013-2014 School year with performing and Visual Arts and Ottoson Reading on Primary and Contributing Evaluations, seconded by Ms. Starks.

Voted: 7-0

Mr. Thielman moved that the Arlington School Committee will be participating in Interest Base Bargaining process with the Arlington Education Association, (AEA) and some members will participate in the AEA training this year, seconded by Ms. Starks.

Voted: 7-0

Adjourn

Ms. Heigham moved to adjournment at 9:21 p.m., seconded by Mr. Hayner

Voted: 7-0

Respectfully submitted by

Karen Fitzgerald

Administrative Assistant

Arlington School Committee/css